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TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 23, 2010

Summary: Coverage of a suicide attack in Swat valley's main town of Mingora, killing 13 people including a soldier dominated headlines in all newspapers Tuesday morning. All newspapers highlighted Prime Minister Gilani's meeting with PML-N chief Nawaz Shairf, and his hinting at implementing the Charter of Democracy by March 23, and repeal of the controversial 17th constitutional amendment. Media reported unanimous approval of a resolution in the Senate urging GOP to secure Dr. Aafia's release. U.S. CENTCOM commander General Petraeus' visit, his meetings with senior Pakistani officials, and assurance to get release the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) soon also figured prominently. Some major newspapers reported 27 civilians killed in NATO strikes in Afghanistan. Urdu language dailies reported that the United States allegedly refused to issue visas to seven NWFP parliamentarians because the provincial assembly approved a resolution against enhanced screening at U.S. airports. Commenting on criticism by certain U.S. quarters that termed the arrest of Taliban commander Mullah Baradar as "Islamabad's plan to sabotage the ongoing reconciliation process with insurgents in Afghanistan," "The Nation," maintained that "to all intents and purposes, the Americans are never happy, no matter whatever we do. One day, they are slinging mud on Islamabad for not doing enough in the anti-terror war and when it responds to the call, they chastise it for having ulterior motives." End Summary.

TOP STORIES

News Story: 13 Die In Mingora Car Bomb Blast - "The News" (02/23)

"Thirteen people, including a soldier, four women were killed and 42 others sustained injuries in a suicide blast at the busy Nishat Chowk in Mingora city in the troubled Swat Valley on Monday. The militancy-scarred valley was once again soaked in blood when a bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into a convoy of security forces driving through the bazaar."

News Story: PM Swears By CoD, Promises Package By March 23 - "Dawn" (02/23)

"After a breakfast meeting with PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif at his Raiwind residence, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told reporters in Lahore on Monday he would ask the parliament's constitutional reforms committee to complete its report on amending the Constitution before March 23."

News Story: Senate Urges Steps For Aafia's Release - "Dawn" (02/23)

"The Senate called upon the government on Monday to take political and diplomatic measures for immediate release of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui

and her repatriation to Pakistan from the United States. The resolution, originally moved by JUI-F's Talha Mahmood, was amended at the request of the Leader of the House and Leader of Opposition. It was jointly moved by both sides and unanimously adopted."

News Story: World Has Obligation To Support Pakistan, Zardari Tells U.S. - "The News" (02/23)

"President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday said the U.S. should realize that a stable and democratic Pakistan was necessary for peace and for that the international community had a great role to play with a well-structured economic development agenda for Pakistan. He was talking to Commander of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) General David H Petraeus, who called on him, at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on Monday. Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and other members of the visiting delegation were also present during the meeting."

News Story: Zardari Reiterates Call For Transfer Of Drone Technology To Pakistan - "Daily Times" (02/23)

"President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday reiterated Pakistan's call for transfer of drone technology to be used by its own security forces against the Taliban for wider public acceptability. The president expressed these views during a meeting with General David H. Petraeus, commander of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), who called on him at the Presidency."

News Story: Gen. Petraeus Meets Gilani, Kayani - "Dawn" (02/23)

"U.S. General David Petraeus arrived in Pakistan to bolster the relationship with a key regional ally, as a suicide bombing claimed nine lives in the country's northwest. Gen. Petraeus met Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, after arriving in Pakistan on Monday, a statement issued by the PM's office said."

News Story: Progress Slower Than Expected In Afghan Offensive: Mullen "Dawn" (02/23)

"The U.S.-led offensive in southern Afghanistan is progressing at a slower pace than expected due to Taliban resistance and deadly roadside bombs, U.S. Defense Chiefs said on Wednesday. The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates also expressed condolences over the deaths of Afghan civilians in a NATO air strike, saying it underlined the risks associated with any allied military action."

News Story: 41 Afghans Die In Violence - "Dawn" (02/23)

"A NATO air strike killed up to 27 Afghan civilians, including women and a child, sparking fresh anger from Kabul on Monday against U.S.-led forces pressing a major offensive to defeat the Taliban. In a further blow to efforts to quell the eight-year conflict, a suicide bomber killed an influential Afghan leader and 13 other people in a relatively peaceful eastern province on Monday, police said."

News Story: 7 Members of NWFP Assembly denied U.S. Visas - "Aajkal," "Khabrain," "Express" (02/23)

"In retaliation to the passage of a resolution in NWFP Assembly against the controversial enhanced screening, the U.S. government has refused to issue visas to seven members, including three provincial ministers. Meanwhile, the assembly has sent its resolution against body screening regulations, applicable to the nationals of 14 Muslim states including Pakistan, to the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar. According to the sources, seven members had applied for U.S. visas before the passage of this resolution, and had passed mandatory interviews. But, when they contacted the U.S. Embassy on Monday, they were denied visas."

News Story: FBI Chief Likely To Visit Pakistan On 24th - "Daily Times" (02/23)

"Federal Bureau of Investigation chief Robert Muller is likely to visit Pakistan on February 24 to discuss various issues with his Pakistani counterparts, sources told Daily Times on Monday. According to sources, he will raise the issue of the arrest of five

U.S. nationals who were caught by Pakistani security personnel during a raid on a house in Sargodha's Aziz Bhatti Town."

News Story: Holbrooke Alive And Kicking - "The News" (02/23)

"Rumors that Special representative to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Ambassador Holbrooke has become a persona non grata with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and is not in fabulous standing with corners of the Obama White House, appeared to have subsided. Ambassador Holbrooke was back in Islamabad and Kabul on his recent 7th trip to the region last week. As a diplomat observed, with diverging degree of admiration and regret, 'Never, ever count Holbrooke out.'

News Story: Pakistan Goes To Delhi Talks With Enhanced Image In U.S. - "Dawn" (02/23)

"As Pakistan goes to New Delhi on Thursday for crucial talks with its larger neighbor, there's a realization in the U.S. capital that India alone cannot bring stability to South Asia. The change in Washington's attitude happened slowly but by the time India signaled its willingness to resume talks with Pakistan, it had become obvious that the Americans had once again developed a new respect for Islamabad."

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News Story: Militant Leader Claims He Rejected Offers To Explode Bombs In Pakistan - "The News" (02/23)

"A known Taliban commander, Qari Ziaur Rehman, who has been engaged in fighting against security forces in Bajaur, claimed on Sunday that he had rejected lucrative offers and financial support offered to him by Afghanistan's Northern Alliance for fighting against the Pakistani military and carrying out bomb blasts in the country."

News Story: Elders Asked To Hand Over Militants To Bajaur Admin - "The News" (02/23)

"The political administration arrested 16 tribesmen of Mandal tribe and set a three-day deadline for the tribal elders to hand over militants and miscreants or face the consequences."

POLITICAL ISSUES

News Story: Generals On Extension Never Considered For Top Slots - "The News" (02/23)

"No three-star general either on extension or on ROR (retirement on return) will be considered either for the top slot in the Army as chief of the Army staff or for the office of chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) when the incumbent generals retire after serving their tenure."

News Story: India Will Talk, But Pakistan Must Curb 'Terror': Patil - "Dawn" (02/23)

"India said on Monday that any meaningful relationship with Pakistan required Islamabad to crack down on "terrorism" -- as the rivals prepared for their first official talks since the Mumbai attacks. In a speech to the opening session of Parliament, President Pratibha Patil left the door open for improved relations between the two countries."

ECONOMY/ENVIRONMENT

News Story: Extension Of Market Access To Pakistan: EU Likely To Seek Waiver Of WTO's Condition - "Business Recorder" (02/23)

"The European Union is likely to seek a waiver from the World Trade Organization's condition in a drive to extend additional market access to Pakistani products in the EU markets. This issue was extensively discussed at recent meetings held in Brussels between Pakistan and the EU officials. Secretary Commerce Ministry, Zafar Mahmood, who returned from Brussels on Monday, told Business Recorder."

News Story: EDB Seeks Establishment Of Exim Bank In Pakistan - "Daily Times" (02/23)

"Stakeholders of engineering sector on Monday have underlined the need of establishment of Exim Bank in Pakistan for increasing export of their products. This was suggested in a meeting held Monday at Engineering Development Board (EDB) in connection with formulation of National Engineering Export Development Strategy (NEEDS)."

MISCELLANEOUS

News Story: Tehran To Respond Strongly To Any Attack Against It - "The News" (02/23)

"Iran said on Monday it is considering plans to start building two new uranium enrichment plants from next month, with the sites concealed in the mountains to avert air strikes. The announcement from Iran's atomic chief Ali Akbar Salehi came soon after top U.S. General David Petraeus warned that Washington would now pursue 'pressure track' against Iran to thwart its galloping nuclear program."

News Story: Presidency's Drivers Slip Away In U.S. - "The Nation" (02/23)

"Five official drivers of the Presidency, who had been sent on a special training program last year, have managed to slip in the United State (U.S.), 'The Nation' has learnt reliably."

EDITORIALS/OPINIONS

Editorial: A Reality Check, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/23)

"The arrest of a high profile Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar by Pakistan is being questioned by certain U.S. quarters in a negative vein and they have leveled the charge that the move is part of Islamabad's plan to sabotage the ongoing reconciliation process with the insurgents in Afghanistan.... To all intents and purposes, the Americans are never happy, no matter whatever we do. One day, they are slinging mud on Islamabad for not doing enough in the anti-terror war and when it responds to the call, they chastise it for having ulterior motives. This is inevitable when the relationship between both the countries remains that of master-slave."

Editorial: Militants Feel The Heat And Surrender, an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/23)

"In the wake of successful operations Rah-e-Nijat and Rah-e-Raast, the menace of terrorism, which was assuming dangerous proportions, is now under effective check and the situation in the affected area is fast returning to normalcy.... Though there are still instances of terrorism and militants continue to strike targets in various parts of the country, their frequency has dropped and it seems that their strength is dying down.... We hope that with effective coordination and continued pressure, the law enforcing agencies would soon be able to restore normalcy in all the troubled areas."

Editorial: Pakistan Should Play Its Role In U.S-Taliban Talks, an editorial note in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (02/23)

"According to the American channel Fox News, police in Pakistan have captured another most wanted Taliban commander Maulvi Kabeer.... According to latest reports, the U.S. has expressed reservations on Taliban leaders' arrests in Pakistan. America's stand is that they are in talks with the Taliban leadership, talks that would pave the way for [U.S.] withdrawal from Afghanistan and restore peace and that arrests would worsen the situation once more.... Arresting Taliban leaders conducting talks with the U.S. is like adding fuel to the dying fires of unrest.... Instead of capturing these Taliban leaders, the government of Pakistan should treat them as guests and play a positive role in their talks with the U.S."

Editorial: Israel's Concern On Pakistani Nuclear Assets: An Alarm Bell, an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/23)

"Expressing concern on Pakistan's nuclear assets, Israeli President

has said that the international community will have to consider this danger seriously. Apart from incessantly attacking neighboring Arab countries, and massacring unarmed and innocent Palestinians, the Zionist state also destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor. In fact, being incapable to attack Pakistan on its own, Israel is trying to create global consensus against our nuclear assets. We think that Pakistan is more prone to recently-tested Israeli drone aircrafts than Iran. In coming days, Israel may resort to some aerial adventure against Pakistan by using our neighboring countries. It is high time for the Muslim countries to forge unity and use all available diplomatic resources to counter Zionist conspiracies."

Editorial: Be Prepared, Whether There Is A War Or Not, an editorial note in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (02/23)

"The country's renowned scientist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan has said that Pakistan has the capability to inflict irreparable damage on India.... Talking with the Indian newspaper Asian Age, Dr. Qadeer further added that in case of a nuclear war India can neither destroy Lahore nor damage Pakistan in any way.... Besides Dr. Qadeer, Air Chief Rao Qamar Salman has also warned that Pakistan would retaliate with speed and force if anyone [reference to India] gets adventurous.... However, a federal minister has said that Pakistan does not need missiles with a range of thousands of miles as it does not plan to attack the U.S. It is not only for war that a country acquires weapons or modernizes them; weapons also act as deterrents. And how did the minister know that there would not be a war with the U.S.? Did Iraq and Afghanistan ever think they would be at war with America? The reality is before us today. Hence, war or no war, we must remain prepared."

Opinion: Turning The Tide Of Militancy, an op-ed by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/23)

"Have the military operations in South Waziristan, other tribal areas and Swat helped to create a strategic moment in the country's struggle against militants? Will 2010 be decisive in reversing the tide of militancy after a deadly year that saw a record number of terrorist attacks and killings? Has military action scattered the local Taliban or irrevocably weakened the movement? There are no easy answers to these questions in a fluid and fraught situation gravely affected by border volatility that is being heightened by the escalating war in Afghanistan. The consolidation of gains made by military offensives will depend on overcoming a sobering number of hurdles and resolving critical governance issues. This means a greater role for political rather than military actors in the transition to the post-conflict phase.... The key question is whether a capacity can be generated for such a 'civilian surge' even as the various law enforcement agencies take sustained steps to dismantle the syndicate of terror that still operates in the country. In the longer run the neutralization of this network will also rest on bringing to an end the conflicts and disputes in the region that have motivated and nourished the forces of militancy."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson